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ABSTRACT

This report presents results of a 1997 survey of the governing boards of public colleges and universities to identify trends in their membership and board policies and practices. Among highlights are the following: (1) boards have an average size of 11 members; (2) nearly half of board members are selected by gubernatorial appointment; (3) 41 percent of respondents stated that political party affiliation was important in board selection; (4) 34 percent had conducted a review of their own performance within the past 5 years; (5) more board members were female than in 1985; (6) the racial and ethnic composition of boards has not changed significantly since 1985; (7) 62 percent of board members are aged 40 to 59; (8) almost 37 percent of board members are business executives; (9) less than 1 percent of board members are members of other college/university boards; and (10) approximately 3 percent of members serve on corporate boards and more than 4 percent serve on boards of other nonprofit organizations. Analysis of the 293 responses are presented in text and graphics. Data detailed cover board size and member characteristics including gender, race/ethnicity, age, and primary occupations. Data on board policies and practices are presented concerning the following aspects: required members, members serving on other boards, length of terms and limits, meetings, and performance reviews. (DB)

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Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges

Composition of Governing Boards of Public Colleges and Universities, 1997

BY HOLLY MADSEN

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Composition of Governing Boards of Public Colleges and Universities, 1997

BY HOLLY MADSEN

In late 1996 and early 1997, the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges surveyed nearly 1,100 governing boards of independent and public colleges and universities to examine trends in their membership and certain board policies and practices. This report examines the boards of public colleges and universities.

This survey will be of particular interest to students and scholars of academic trusteeship, but trustees and executive leaders of public institutions also will find it useful and interesting. (AGB conducted a similar survey on the composition of independent college and university governing boards, AGB Occasional Paper No. 36.)

The benchmark data in this survey enable you to compare the composition of your institution's governing board with others of its basic type according to several factors:

- Size
- Race, gender, ethnicity, and age
- Occupation or profession
- Method of member and board chair selection
- Provision of voting trusteeships for the chief executive, faculty, students, and alumni
- Other academic trusteeships
- Corporate and other nonprofit directorships
- Length of terms and term-limit requirements
- Number and length of its typical board meetings
- Commitment to periodic performance self-study

The survey will help you to answer this question: How does our board's composition and its membership policies and practices compare with those of similar boards? Indeed, the survey reveals some interesting shifts over the years that your board may reflect.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE SURVEY RESULTS

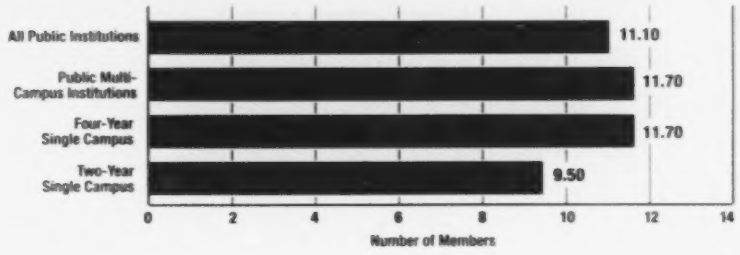
Boards of Public Institutions

- Public boards have an average (mean) size of 11 members each.
- The typical board of a public multicampus institution has 12 voting members. Single-campus institutions are similar in size, averaging 11 members.
- Nearly one-half of all public board members are selected by gubernatorial appointment. Public election is the second most common selection method (29 percent). Another 22 percent of public boards reported that their members are selected through "other" methods, and 2 percent are appointed by the state legislature.
- Forty-one percent of respondents stated that political party affiliation is an important consideration in selecting board members.
- Thirty-four percent of public boards had conducted a review of their own performance within the past five years, and approximately 36 percent employed an outside facilitator to conduct the review.

Board Members

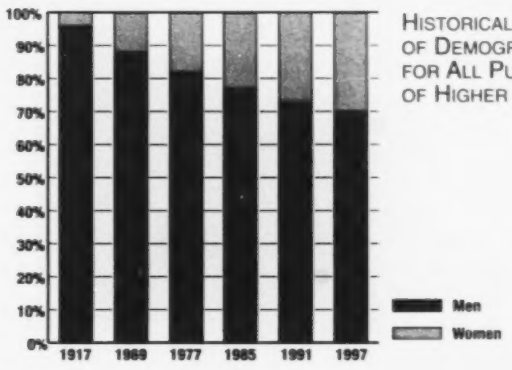
- Thirty percent of all public board members are female, reflecting an increase of 7 percent since 1985.
- The racial and ethnic composition of public boards has not changed significantly since 1985, although the numbers of African Americans on public college and university boards has risen slightly from 11 percent to 11.7 percent. Nearly 83 percent of all board members are white, 3.1 percent are Hispanic, and 2.6 percent were identified as "other minorities."
- Sixty-two percent of all public board members are between the ages of 40 and 59, more than 8 percent are older than 70, and almost 8 percent are younger than 40.
- Almost 37 percent of all public college and university board members are business executives, while 18 percent are described as members of traditional professions, 15 percent are retired, and 14 percent are educators or students.
- Less than 1 percent of public board members serve as members of other college or university boards. This represents a significant downward trend since 1977, when 8 percent reported serving on more than one college or university board. In 1985, approximately 4 percent served on more than one college or university board.
- Approximately 3 percent serve on corporate boards, and more than 4 percent serve on one or more boards of other nonprofit organizations.

AVERAGE (MEAN) SIZE OF GOVERNING BOARDS OF PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS



DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS: BOARD MEMBER GENDER

Gender	All Public Institutions N=3,097 (percentage)	Public Multicampus Institutions (percentage)	Four-year Single-Campus Institutions (percentage)	Two-year Single-Campus Institutions (percentage)
Men	69.9	68.9	70.7	70.7
Women	30.1	31.1	29.3	29.3
Total	100	100	100	100



HISTORICAL COMPARISON OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS FOR ALL PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION—GENDER

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF BOARDS AND BOARD MEMBERS

BOARD SIZE

The boards of public colleges and universities have an overall average (or mean) of 11.1 members and a median of 9.3 members. Four-year institutions reported an average of 11.7 members (median 11.3 members) and two-year institutions an average of 9.5 members (median 8.4 members). Survey respondents reported boards as small as five members and as large as 73. The average board size for all public institutions has increased by two board seats since 1985.

BOARD MEMBER CHARACTERISTICS

Gender

Approximately 70 percent of all public board members are men, a decrease of 7 percent since 1985. In the 82 years since a similar survey was conducted in 1917, women's board memberships have increased more than seven-fold. Women held 4 percent of the seats on boards in 1917, moving to 12 percent in 1969, 18 percent in 1977, 23 percent in 1985, 27 percent in 1991, and finally to 30 percent in 1997.

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Race and Ethnicity

The racial and ethnic composition of public college and university boards has edged—in small increments—toward greater diversity over the past 20 years. A large majority of public board members are white (82.7 percent), while African American (11.7 percent), Hispanic (3.1 percent), Asian/Pacific Islander (1.8 percent), American Indian (.6 percent), and other minority members (.2 percent) fill the remaining seats on boards. The number of African-American public board members has increased by 5.7 percent since 1977. No data on Hispanic representation are available in the 1977 survey; however, since 1985 their proportion has remained stable at approximately 3 percent. The percentage of "other minorities" moved from less than 1 percent in 1969 to 2.6 percent in 1997.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS: BOARD MEMBER RACIAL/ETHNIC BACKGROUND

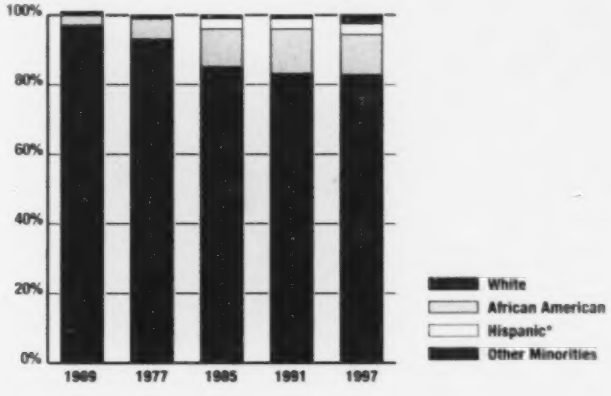
Race/Ethnicity	All Public Institutions N=3,097 (percentage)	Public Multicampus Institutions (percentage)	Four-year Single-Campus Institutions (percentage)	Two-year Single-Campus Institutions (percentage)
White	82.7	82.5	69.0	85.2
African American	11.7	11.0	23.6	10.8
Hispanic	3.1	3.8	2.6	2.4
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.8	1.9	4.8	0.6
American Indian	0.6	0.5	0	1.0
Others	0.2	0.3	0	0
Total*	**100.1**	**100**	**100**	**100**

*Percentages may not total to 100 due to rounding.

HISTORICAL COMPARISON OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS FOR ALL PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION—RACE/ETHNICITY

Race/Ethnicity	1969 %	1977 %	1985 %	1991 %	1997 %
White	97	93	85	83	82.7
African American	3	6	11	13	11.7
Hispanic	*	*	3	3	3.1
Other Minorities	<1	1	<1	<1	2.6

*Note: data not available.

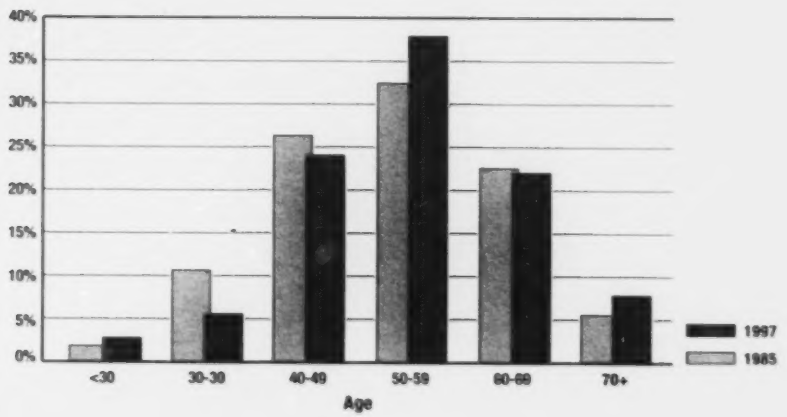


DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS: BOARD MEMBER AGE DISTRIBUTION

Age Range	All Public Institutions N=2689 (percentage)	Public Multicampus Institutions (percentage)	Four-year Single-Campus Institutions (percentage)	Two-year Single-Campus Institutions (percentage)
Under 30 years old	2.3	2.9	2.7	1.1
30-39 years old	5.5	5.0	4.1	7.4
40-49 years old	24.3	25.8	22.4	23.2
50-59 years old	37.9	37.0	44.7	36
60-69 years old	22.1	22.6	21.9	21.5
70 years old +	7.9	6.8	4.1	9.9

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS: HISTORICAL COMPARISON OF TRUSTEE AGE DISTRIBUTION FOR ALL PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

Age Range	1985 %	1997 %
Under 30 years old	1.8	2.3
30-39 years old	10.8	5.5
40-49 years old	26.4	24.3
50-59 years old	32.8	37.9
60-69 years old	22.7	22.1
70 years old +	5.5	7.9



Age Distribution

The largest group of public board members is between 50 and 59 years of age (38 percent). Sixty-eight percent of board members are 50 years of age or older. The smallest group of board members is under 30 years of age (2.3 percent), and only 7.8 percent of all board members are under 40 years old. Since 1985, these figures have changed most significantly in two categories: The group aged 30-39 has decreased from 10.8 percent to 5.5 percent, while the category of members aged 50-59 has increased from 32.8 percent to 37.9 percent. Overall, the survey shows that members of public boards have fewer younger members than they did 12 years earlier.

Primary Occupations

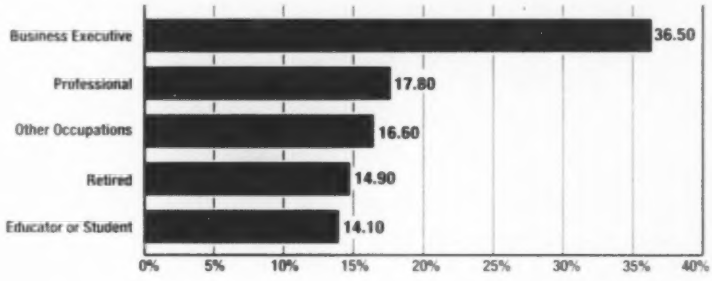
In terms of general occupational groupings, the largest category is business executive. The survey results showed that 36.5 percent of board members are business executives, 17.8 percent are professionals in various fields, and 14.1 percent are educators or students. An additional 16.6 percent work in "other occupations," and 14.9 percent were identified as retired. Within those broad categories, the survey identified the following specific occupations among board members:

- *Business Executive.* This group has remained stable since 1985. Included are small-business executives (13.7 percent); business executives of large corporations (11.1 percent); executives of banking, financial, insurance, or real estate firms (10.3 percent); and other business executives (1.3 percent).
- *Professional.* The number of board members identified as "professionals" fell by 5.2 percent since 1985. They include attorneys (10.1 percent), physicians (2.2 percent), accountants (1.4 percent), dentists (1 percent), social workers (.3 percent), psychologists (.2 percent), and other professionals (2.7 percent).
- *Education.* This category has increased its ranks by 4.2 percent since 1985. It includes teachers and administrators of primary or secondary schools (5 percent), full-time students (2.3 percent), college or university administrators (1.4 percent), college or university faculty (1.4 percent), and others in education (4 percent).

PRIMARY OCCUPATION GROUPS OF BOARD MEMBERS AT PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Primary Occupation	All Public Institutions N=3,052 (percentage)	Public Multicampus Institutions (percentage)	Four-year Single-Campus Institutions (percentage)	Two-year Single-Campus Institutions (percentage)
Business Executive	36.5	36.5	36.2	35.2
Professional	17.8	18.8	16.6	16.8
Other Occupations	16.6	17.6	15.3	15.1
Retired	14.9	13.5	14.4	17.9
Educator or Student	14.1	13.6	17.5	15.1
Total	**99.9**	**100**	**100**	**100.1**

**Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.*



COMPARISON OF 1997 AND 1985 SURVEYS: BOARD MEMBER OCCUPATIONS FOR BOARD MEMBERS AT ALL PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Primary Occupation	1985 %	1997 %
Education	**9.9**	**14.1**
Teacher/administrator, primary or secondary school	6.3	5.0
Full-time Student	1.1	2.3
Administrator, College or University	1.3	1.4
Faculty, College or University	0.9	1.4
Others in education	0.3	4.0
Business Executive	**36.3**	**36.5**
Small business	14.8	13.7
Large corporation	10.5	11.1
Banking, financial, insurance or real estate	9.0	10.3
Other business executives	1.3	1.3
Retired	**11.9**	**14.9**
Retired educator	5.3	5.7
Retired corporate or financial officer	2.7	4.2
Professional	2.1	3.1
Any others	1.8	1.9

Primary Occupation	1985 %	1997 %
Professional	**23.0**	**17.8**
Attorney	10.4	10.1
Physician	4.9	2.2
Accountant	1.0	1.4
Dentist	2.0	1.0
Social Worker	1.2	0.3
Psychologist	0.1	0.2
Other professionals	3.4	2.7
Other Occupations	**19.2**	**16.6**
Homemaker	5.8	3.7
Administrator/executive of a nonprofit organization	1.5	3.2
Government official, non-elected	2.0	2.5
Farmer or rancher	4.4	2.1
Government official, elected	1.3	1.8
Clergy	1.0	0.6
Skilled or semi-skilled worker	0.6	0.4
Journalist	0.6	0.2
Artist, writer, or musician	0.2	0.1
Others	1.8	1.4

Board Member Occupations (in detail)

Primary Occupation	All Public Institutions N=3,052 (percentage)	Public Multicampus Institutions (percentage)	Four-year Single-Campus Institutions (percentage)	Two-year Single-Campus Institutions (percentage)
Education	**14.1**	**13.6**	**17.5**	**15.1**
Teacher/administrator, primary or secondary schools	5.0	4.7	3.9	7.3
Full-time Student	2.3	2.8	2.2	1.1
Administrator, College or University	1.4	1.1	2.6	1.1
Faculty, College or University	1.4	1.6	1.3	1.0
Others in education	4.0	3.4	7.4	4.6
Business Executive	**36.5**	**36.5**	**36.2**	**35.2**
Small business	13.7	12.5	8.7	14.0
Large corporation	11.1	11.5	17.0	9.6
Banking, financial, insurance or real estate	10.3	11.2	8.3	10.6
Other business executives	1.3	1.3	2.2	1.1
Professional	**17.8**	**18.8**	**16.6**	**16.8**
Attorney	10.1	12.1	10.9	6.2
Physician	2.2	2.9	2.2	2.3
Accountant	1.4	1.6	0.9	1.2
Dentist	1.0	0.8	0.4	1.6
Social Worker	0.3	0.5	0	0.1
Psychologist	0.2	0.2	0	0.1
Other professionals	2.7	1.8	2.2	5.2
Other Occupations	**16.6**	**17.6**	**15.3**	**15.1**
Homemaker	3.7	3.6	4.8	3.6
Administrator/executive of a nonprofit organization	3.2	3.3	3.5	2.6
Government official, non-elected	2.5	1.8	2.2	1.7
Farmer or rancher	2.1	2.3	0	3.3
Government official, elected	1.8	2.2	2.6	1.0
Clergy	0.6	0.8	0.9	0.5
Skilled or semi-skilled worker	0.4	0.3	0	0.6
Journalist	0.2	0.2	0.9	0
Artist, writer, or musician	0.1	0.1	0	0.1
Others	1.4	1.5	0.4	1.1
Retired	**14.9**	**13.5**	**14.4**	**17.9**
Retired educator	5.7	5.3	5.2	7.8
Retired corporate or financial officer	4.2	3.4	5.7	4.9
Retired Professional	3.1	3.0	3.1	3.2
Any others	1.9	1.8	0.4	2.1

• *Other occupations.* The category loosely identified as "other occupations" declined by 2.6 percent since 1985. In 1997, the largest subcategory is homemaker, with 3.7 percent. Nonprofit organization executives represent 3.2 percent, while non-elected government officials comprise 2.5 percent; elected officials 1.8 percent; farmers and ranchers 2.1 percent; clergy .6 percent; journalists .2 percent; skilled or semi-skilled workers .4 percent; artists, writers, and musicians .1 percent; and "others" 1.4 percent.

• *Retired.* The proportion of board members who are retired rose from 3 percent in 1985 to 14.9 percent in 1997. Within this group are retired educators (5.7 percent), retired corporate or financial officers (4.2 percent), retired professionals (3.1 percent), and other retired persons (1.9 percent).

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BOARD POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Board Selection Practices

Most members of governing boards of public colleges and universities are selected either by gubernatorial appointment (47.8 percent) or by popular election (29 percent). A small number of boards are selected by legislative appointment (2 percent), and another 22.2 percent of boards use "other selection methods." The board chair is selected by the board itself at 94 percent of public institutions, while the governor makes the selection for 3.1 percent, and "another person or group" selects the chair for 2.7 percent of the respondents.

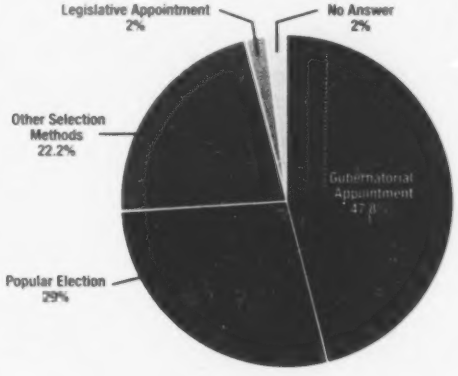
Board Selection Practices

Question: *Which of the following best describes how the majority of your voting board members are selected?*

Method of Selection	All Public Institutions N=293 (percentage)	Public Multicampus Institutions (percentage)	Four-year Single-Campus Institutions (percentage)	Two-year Single-Campus Institutions (percentage)
By gubernatorial appointment	47.8	57.4	76.2	22.5
By popular election	29.0	25.8	4.8	46.1
Other selection methods	22.2	14.8	9.5	33.7
By appointment by the legislature	2.0	0.6	9.5	0
No answer	2.0	2.6	4.8	1.1

Selection of the Board Chair

Person or Group who selects the Chairperson	All Public Institutions N=293 (percentage)	Public Multicampus Institutions (percentage)	Four-year Single-Campus Institutions (percentage)	Two-year Single-Campus Institutions (percentage)
The board itself	93.9	90.3	95.2	100
The governor	3.1	4.5	4.8	0
Another person or group	2.7	4.5	0	0
No answer	0.3	0	0	0



Board Selection Practices for All Public Colleges and Universities

(Percentages add to more than 100 due to rounding.)

INSTITUTIONS THAT PROVIDE FOR STUDENTS, FACULTY, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, ALUMNI, AND OTHER REPRESENTATIVES TO SERVE AS VOTING BOARD MEMBERS

QUESTION: *Are any of your voting board members required to come from the following groups?*

Group	All Public Institutions N=293 (percentage responding "yes")	Public Multicampus Institutions (percentage) responding "yes")	Four-year Single-Campus Institutions (percentage) responding "yes")	Two-year Single-Campus Institutions (percentage) responding "yes")
Students	20.5	25.2	28.6	7.9
Faculty	3.4	5.2	*	*
Chief Executive	4.8	5.2	4.8	2.2
Alumni/Alumnae	7.5	5.2	23.8	3.4
Any Others	5.8	7.1	*	*

**Denotes no data available.*

Residency Requirements and Political Party Affiliation

For approximately 67 percent of public college and universities, the electoral district or county of residence is a factor or a requirement in board appointments and elections. Political party affiliation is a consideration in the selection of voting members in 41 percent of public institutions.

Required Members

It is common for many institutions to require a specific number or percentage of board members to come from particular constituencies. The 1997 survey identified five constituent groups, including chief executives, church members or representatives, faculty, students, and alumni.

Approximately 5 percent of public boards provide for the institution's chief executive to serve as a voting member of the board. Almost 8 percent require alumni to serve as voting members of their boards (23.8 percent do so among four-year campuses; only 3.4 percent among two-year institutions). In addition, 20.5 percent of public boards provide for one or more students to serve as voting members, and 3.4 percent require faculty members to serve.

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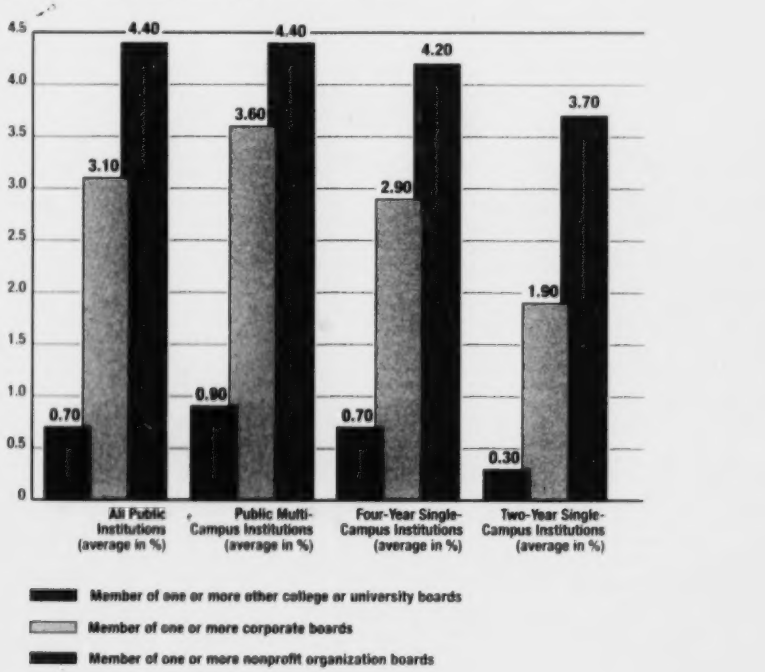
Members Serving on Other Boards

An average of less than one member serves on one or more other college or university boards, and an average of three members serve on one or more corporate boards. The numbers are slightly higher for board members who also serve on one or more nonprofit organization boards: 4.4 percent for all public institutions.

Voting Board Members Who Also Serve on Other Boards

Question: *How many voting members of your board also serve on another college or university board? How many serve on one or more corporate boards? How many serve on one or more nonprofit organization boards?*



Length of Board Member Terms

Term Length	All Public Institutions (percentage)	Public Multicampus Institutions (percentage)	Four-year Single-Campus Institutions (percentage)	Two-year Single-Campus Institutions (percentage)
1 to 2-year terms	0	0	0	0
3-year terms	11.3	9.0	4.8	13.5
4-year terms	30.4	30.3	33.3	32.6
5-year terms	7.8	7.1	4.8	10.1
6-year terms	34.5	36.8	38.1	31.5
Over 6 years	14.0	13.5	19.0	11.2
No answer	2.0	3.2	0	1.1
Average (mean) term	5.3	5.3	5.9	5.1
Median term	5.4	5.1	5.8	4.8

Board Member Term-Limit Rules

Board Policy	All Public Institutions (percentage)	Public Multicampus Institutions (percentage)	Four-year Single-Campus Institutions (percentage)	Two-year Single-Campus Institutions (percentage)
Boards that limit the number of consecutive member terms	22.5	26.5	38.1	6.7
Among boards that limit terms, those that permit members who have served the maximum term to be reappointed after some period of time	62.1	56.1	75.0	50.0
Boards that limit the number of years a chairperson may serve	32.4	34.2	38.1	25.8

Board Member Terms Limits

Number of Terms	All Public Institutions (percentage)	Public Multicampus Institutions (percentage)	Four-year Single-Campus Institutions (percentage)	Two-year Single-Campus Institutions (percentage)
1 term limit	2.4	2.6	0	0
2 term limit	18.1	21.9	38.1	5.6
3 term limit	1.0	1.3	0	0
4 term limit	0.3	0	0	0
No limit	76.5	72.3	57.1	93.3
No answer	1.7	1.9	4.8	1.1

Length of Terms and Limits

The most common term lengths for board membership are four-year terms (30.4 percent) and six-year terms (34.5 percent). Three-year terms are the practice for 11.3 percent, five-year terms for 7.8 percent, and longer than six-year terms for 14 percent.

Almost one-quarter of all public boards (22.5 percent) limit the number of consecutive terms a member may serve (the figure is 38.1 percent among four-year campuses). Approximately 62 percent of boards permit members who already have served the maximum term to be reappointed after some minimum period of time—usually after one year. Almost 77 percent of public college and university boards have no term limits, while 20.5 percent limit service to one or two terms. Approximately 32 percent of boards limit the number of years a board chair may serve.

Meetings

In response to the question, "How many formal meetings did the board have in the past 12 months?" more than 72 percent of all public boards indicated they had met more than six times annually. Another 9.6 percent met six times during the year. Only about 17 percent met less frequently: 3.1 percent meet one to three times per year, 8.5 percent meet four times per year, and 5.1 percent meet more than five times per year.

Performance Reviews

Almost 34 percent of boards reported that they had conducted a review of their own performance within the past five years (approximately the same proportion as in 1991). Within that group, 36.4 percent employed an outside facilitator to conduct the review. Approximately 27 percent of boards have policies requiring periodic formal performance reviews. Another 64 percent reported that they conduct periodic reviews according to institutional tradition.

AVERAGE FREQUENCY AND LENGTH OF BOARD MEETINGS (IN HOURS)

Number of Meetings Held Each Year	All Public Institutions (percentage)	Public Multicampus Institutions (percentage)	Four-year Single-Campus Institutions (percentage)	Two-year Single-Campus Institutions (percentage)
1-3 board meetings	3.1	1.9	9.5	0
4 board meetings	8.5	6.5	33.3	1.1
5 board meetings	5.1	3.9	19.0	4.5
6 board meetings	9.6	10.3	9.5	4.5
Over 6 meetings	72.4	74.8	28.6	89.9
No answer	1.4	2.6	0	0
Average number of meetings per year	10.3	10.7	5.5	11.9
Average length of each board meeting (hours)	4.0	4.9	5.3	2.2

BOARD SELF-ASSESSMENT

Practice or Policy	All Public Institutions (percentage responding "yes")	Public Multicampus Institutions (percentage responding "yes")	Four-year Single-Campus Institutions (percentage responding "yes")	Two-year Single-Campus Institutions (percentage responding "yes")
Boards that conducted a performance review in the past 5 years	33.8	32.9	23.8	38.2
Among boards that conducted a review, those that employed an outside facilitator	36.4	37.3	60.0	29.4
Boards with a policy requiring periodic formal reviews	27.3	27.5	0	32.4
Boards that, by tradition, conduct periodic reviews	63.6	54.9	80.0	76.5

ABOUT THIS SURVEY

The six-page survey of governing boards of public colleges and universities consisted of 24 questions, many of which contained additional subquestions. The University of Maryland Survey Research Center conducted the mailing, and Redata, Inc. of Bethesda, Md., tabulated the data. Two hundred ninety-three of the 535 public college and university boards responded, representing a 55 percent rate of response. Among those respondents, 132 were self-described single-institution governing boards, 60 identified themselves as boards of single-institutions with branch campuses, and 95 described themselves as multicampus or university-system governing boards. Six did not identify their institution type. The group comprises a diverse set of two-year and four-year colleges and universities and specialized institutions with a broad range of sizes and missions.

AGB published the results of similar surveys in 1977, 1985, and 1991. The results of the 1997 survey are comparable with the findings of the previous surveys. In some respects, data from independent surveys conducted in 1917 and 1969 also are comparable, although the survey sizes and methodologies differed from the AGB surveys.

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